Wasaa'il al-Thabaat

Means of Steadfastness: Standing Firm in Islam

English Translation

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Contents

Introduction

Praise be to Allaah; we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allaah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil deeds. Whomsoever Allaah guides cannot be led astray, and whomsoever He leaves astray cannot be guided. I bear witness that there is no god except Allaah alone, with no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

Steadfastness in the religion of Allaah is a basic requirement for every sincere Muslim who wants to follow the Straight Path with determination and understanding. This matter is of great importance for a number of reasons, including the following:

1. The present situation of the societies in which Muslims live, the types of temptation to which they are painfully exposed and the kinds of whims and desires, doubts and confusion which have caused religion to become something strange, so that those who adhere to it are likened to something weird, and people say: "The

one who holds on to his religion is like one who holds on to a burning coal."

Anyone who has a brain will not doubt that Muslims today need the means of steadfastness more than their predecessors among the salaf did, and that the effort required is greater, because of the corruption of our times, and the scarcity and weakness of brothers and supporters who could help.

2. The high incidence of apostasy (*riddah*) and backsliding, even among those who are working for Islam, which causes Muslims to fear ending up the same way, so he seeks the means of standing firm so that he can reach dry land, as it were.

3. The relationship of this issue to the heart, of which the Prophet(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "It changes more than a pot of rapidly boiling water." (Reported by Ahmad, 6/4; al-Haakim, 2/289; *al-Silsilat al-Saheehah*, 1772). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) also gave another example of the heart: "The heart (*qalb*) takes its name from its constant changes (*taqallub* – alteration, variation, ups and downs). The likeness of the heart is that of a feather at the root of a tree, being turned over and over by the wind." (Reported by Ahmad, 4/408; *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 2364).

As a later poet said:

"He is only called *insaan* (man) because of his *nasyaan*(forgetfulness)

And it is only called *al-qalb* (the heart) because it constantly varies (*yataqallib*)."

Making the one stand firm who is tossed about by the winds of doubt and confusion is a serious matter which needs tremendous means as befits the seriousness and difficulty of the task at hand.

It is part of Allaah's mercy towards us that He has shown to us, in His Book and through the words and life of His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) many ways of being steadfast in Islam. I will discuss some of them below:

Means of Steadfastness in Islam

Turning towards the Qur'aan

The Qur'aan is the foremost aid to standing firm in Islam. It is the strong rope and clear light of Allaah. Whoever adheres to it, Allaah will protect him; whoever follows it, Allaah will save him; and whoever calls to its way will be guided to the Straight Path.

Allaah has stated that the reason why this Book was revealed in stages was to help His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to stand firm in his faith. In the context of refuting the doubts of the kuffaar, He says (interpretation of the meaning): "*And those who disbelieve say, 'Why is not the Qur'aan revealed to him all at once?' Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages. And no example to similitude do they bring (to oppose or to find fault in you or in this Qur'aan), but We reveal to you the truth (against that similitude or example), and the better explanation thereof." [al-Furqaan 25:32-33]*

Why is the Qur'aan such a source of strength?

1. because it cultivates faith and purifies the soul through contact with Allaah.

2. Because these aayaat bring peace and tranquillity to the heart of the believer, so he will not be tossed about by the winds of fitnah; his heart will be content with the remembrance of Allaah.

3. Because it provides the Muslim with the correct understanding and values with which he will be able to evaluate the situation around him. It also gives him the standards against which he may judge things in a proper and consistent manner, without varying from one situation or person to another.

4. Because it refutes the doubts that are stirred up by the enemies of Islam, kuffaar and munaafiqeen alike, as in the following examples from the early days of Islam:

1. The effect of the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): *“Your Lord (O Muhammad) has neither forsaken you nor hated you” [al-Duhaa 93:3]* on the heart of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), when the mushrikoon said, “Muhammad has been forsaken…” (See *Saheeh Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi*, 12/156).
2. The effect of the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): *“… The tongue of the man they refer to is foreign, while this (the Qur’aan) is a clear Arabic tongue” [al-Nahl 16:103].* The Quraysh claimed that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was taught by a human being and that he took the Qur’aan from a Roman carpenter in Makkah.
3. The effect of the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): *“…Surely they have fallen into trial [fitnah]…” [al-Tawbah 9:49]* on the hearts of the believers, when the munaafiq had said, *“Grant me leave (to be exampted from jihaad) and put me not into trial.” [al-Tawbah 9:49 – interpretation of the meaning].*

Is it not the greatest of help, strengthening the heart of the believer, refuting doubts and silencing the voices of falsehood? Indeed it is, by Allaah.

When the believers were coming back from al-Hudaybiyah, Allaah promised them much war booty which they alone would go and take (i.e., the booty of Khaybar). [He told them that] the munaafiqoon would ask to accompany them, but the Muslims would say, “You shall not follow us.” They would persist in trying to change the words of Allaah, and they would say to the believers, “Nay, you envy us,” to which Allaah responded by saying,*“Nay, but they understand not except a little.” [al-Fath, 48:15 – interpretation of the meaning]*. Then all of this happened to the believers, step by step, word by word.

1. From this we can see the difference between those whose lives are connected to the Qur’aan, who read it, recite it, memorize it, study it, ponder its meanings and take it as their starting-point and their refuge, and those who are

preoccupied with the words of man.

2. Would that those who seek knowledge would devote most of their efforts to understanding the Qur'aan properly!

Adhering to the laws of Allaah and doing righteous deeds

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"Allaah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allaah will cause to go astray those who are zaalimoon (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.), and Allaah does what He wills." [Ibraaheem 14:27].*

Qutaadah said: "As for the life of this world, Allaah will help them to be steadfast in doing good and righteous deeds, and in the Hereafter (He will help them) to remain steadfast in the grave." A similar interpretation was narrated from more than one of the Salaf. (*Tafseer al-Qur'aan al-'Azeem* by Ibn Katheer, 3/421).

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"… but if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them, and would have strengthened their (Faith)" [al-Nisa' 4:66],* i.e., it would have strengthened them in their adherence to the Truth.

This is clear, for how can you expect steadfastness on the part of those who are too lazy to do righteous deeds when fitnah raises its ugly head and calamity increases? But Allaah will guide those who believe and do righteous deeds by their faith to the Straight Path. So the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to persevere in doing righteous deeds, and the most beloved of good deeds to him were those that were continuous, even if they were small. When his Companions started to do anything, they would persist in it, and when 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) did something, she would keep it up.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say: "Whoever perseveres in doing twelve rak'ahs [i.e., the*sunan rawaatib* or sunnah prayers which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did constantly], Paradise will be his right." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, 2/273; he said, the hadeeth is hasan or saheeh; see also *Saheeh al-Nisaa'i*, 1/388 and *Saheeh al-Tirmidhi*, 1/131).

According to a hadeeth qudsi, Allaah says: "My slave will keep drawing near to me with naafil acts of worship until I love him."(Reported by al-Bukhaari; see *Fath al-Baari*, 11/340).

Studying the stories of the Prophets and following their example

The evidence for this is the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): *"And all that We relate to you (O Muhammad) of the news of the Messengers is in order that We may make strong and firm your heart thereby. And in this has come to you the truth, as well as an adminition and a reminder for the believers." [Hood 11:120].*

These aayaat were not revealed at the time of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) for the purpose of mere entertainment and amusement. They were revealed for an important purpose, which was to strengthen the heart of the Prophet(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and likewise the hearts of the believers.

1. Think about the meaning of the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): *"They said: 'Burn him and help your aalihah (gods), if you will be doing.' We (Allaah) said: 'O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibraaheem!' And they wanted to harm him, but We made them the worst losers." [al-Anbiya' 21:68-70]*. Ibn 'Abbaas said: "The last thing Ibraaheem said when he was thrown in the fire was, 'Allaah is Sufficient for me and He is the Best Disposer of affairs.'" (*Al-Fath*, 8/22) Do you not feel how he stood firm in the face of oppression and torture, when you read this story?
2. Think about the aayah in which Allaah tells us about Moosa (interpretation of the meaning): "And when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Moosa said: 'We are sure to be overtaken.' Moosa said: 'Nay, verily! With me is my Lord, He will guide me.'" [al-Shu'ara' 26:61-62]. Do you not feel how he stood firm when he was being pursued by the hosts of Pharaoh and was surrounded by cries of despair from his own people?
3. Read the story of the magicians of Pharaoh, which is an example of a small group that adhered firmly to the truth once it had become apparent to them. Do you not see how they stood firm in the face of threats issued by the oppressor who said, *"Believe you in him (Moosa) before I*

give you permission? Verily! He is your chief who taught you magic. So I will surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of date-palms, and you shall surely know which of us [I (Pharaoh) or the Lord of Moosa] can give the severe and more lasting torment." [Ta-Ha 20:71 – interpretation of the meaning]. The small group of believers stood firm, with no thought of retreat, and said: *"We prefer you not over the clear signs that have come to us, and to Him Who created us. So decree whatever you desire to decree, for can only decree (regarding) the life of this world." [Ta-Ha 20:72 – interpretation of the meaning]*.

4. Also think about the story of the believer in Soorat Yaa-Seen, the believer of Pharaoh's household, the people of the Ditch (*al-ukhdood*), and others, which teach us the greatest lessons we could ever learn about standing firm in our faith.

Du'aa' (supplication)

One of the characteristics of the believing slaves of Allaah is that they turn to Allaah with du'aa', asking Him to help them to stand firm: *"Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us…" [Aal 'Imraan 3:8 – interpretation of the meaning]; "Our Lord! Pour out constancy [patience] on us and make our steps firm…" [al-Baqarah 2:250 – Yusuf 'Ali's translation]*.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us that "The hearts of the sons of Adam are as one between the fingers of the Most Merciful, and He directs them as He wills." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad from Ibn 'Umar; see *Saheeh Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi*, 16/204). The Messenger of Allaah often used to say, "O Controller of the hearts, make my heart adhere firmly to Your religion." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi from Anas. *Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi*, 6/349; *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 7864).

Remembrance of Allaah (dhikr)

This is one of the greatest means of being steadfast in Islam.

Think about the combination described in this aayah (interpretation of the meaning): *"O you who believe! When you meet (an enemy) force, take a firm stand against them and remember the Name of Allaah much, so that you may be successful." [al-Anfaal 8:45]*. Dhikr is one of the most effective aids to standing firm in jihaad.

"Think about how the physical strength of the Persians and Romans let them down when they needed it most" (Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, in *Al-Daa' wa'l-Dawaa'*) – despite the small numbers of men and weapons of those who remembered the Name of Allaah much.

How did Yoosuf (upon whom be peace) stand firm in the face of temptation of the part of the powerful and beautiful woman who called him to do wrong? Did he not enter the fortress of "seeking refuge in Allaah" and thus defeat the waves of temptation? This is the effect of adhkaar (remembering Allaah) on making the believers steadfast.

<u>Striving to follow the correct way</u>

The only correct way, which every Muslim must follow, is the way of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, the path of the victorious group and the saved sect, the people of pure 'aqeedah and sound methodology, the followers of the Sunnah and the (sound) evidence. The Muslim must be distinct from the enemies of Allaah and be different from the people of falsehood.

If you want to know the value of this in standing firm, then ask yourself: why have so many people, in the past and nowadays, been led astray? Why have they become confused? Why have their feet not stood firm on the Straight Path? Why did they not die following it, or why did they come to it so late in life, after wasting so much precious time?

So you see them, moving from one kind of misguided bid'ah to another, from philosophy to *'ilm al-kalaam* (Islamic philosophy), from Mu'tazili thought to the way of twisting and misinterpreting the clear aayaat of the Qur'aan, from one Sufi tareeqah to another…

> Thus are the people of bid’ah, confused and shaky in their faith. See how the people of *‘ilm al-kalaam* are deprived of steadfastness at the time of death. Hence the salaf said, “The people who suffer the most doubt at the time of death are the people of *al-kalaam*.” But think about it: has any follower of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa’ah ever turned his back on this way in discontent after he has come to know and understand it? People may abandon it because of their whims and desires, or because of doubts if their understanding is weak, but no one has left because he saw something more correct or because he thought this way was wrong.
>
> The proof of this is to be seen in the questions posed by Heraclius to Abu Sufyaan about the followers of Muhammad(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). He asked, “Has anyone ever left this religion out of discontent after entering it?” Abu Sufyaan said, “No.” Then Heraclius said, “This is how it is when the joy of faith fills the heart.” (Reported by al-Bukhaari,*al-Fath*, 1/32).
>
> We have heard a lot about great leaders who moved from one kind of bid’ah to another, and others whom Allaah guided and so they left falsehood behind and joined the madhhab of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa’ah, despising their former ways. But do we ever hear about the opposite?
>
> If you want to stand firm in your Islam, then you must follow the way of the believers.

<u>Training and education</u>

Gradual, conscious training in faith, based on knowledge, is one of the basic factors in standing firm in Islam.

Training in faith is that which fills the heart and consciousness with fear, hope and love (of Allaah), as opposed to the dryness which results from ignoring the texts of the Qur’aan and Sunnah and devoting too much attention to the words of men.

Training based on knowledge is that which is based on saheeh evidence, as opposed to mere imitation and blind following.

Conscious training is that which recognizes the way of the sinners and wrongdoers, studies the plots of the enemies of Islam and properly understands and evaluates reality and events, as opposed to a blinkered worldview and narrow horizons.

Gradual training is that which takes the Muslim step by step towards achieving perfection with proper planning, as opposed to spontaneous and hasty progress in fits and starts.

In order to understand the importance of this element in standing firm, let us go back to the seerah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and ask ourselves:

1. What was the source of the Companions' steadfastness in Makkah, at the time of their persecution?
2. How could Bilaal, Khabbaab, Mas'ab, the family of Yaasir and other dispossessed Muslims stand firm? How could even the greatest of the Sahaabah stand firm when they were boycotted by others?
3. Is it possible that they could have stood firm without extensive training under the supervision of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), which had honed and refined their personalities?
4. Take, for example, the Sahaabi Khabbaab ibn al-Arat (may Allaah be pleased with him), whose owner used to heat an iron skewer until it was red-hot, then place it on his bare back where it would burn until it was extinguished by the fat of his back flowing over it. What made him able to bear all that with patience and perseverance?
5. And think of Bilaal beneath the rock on the burning sands, and Sumayyah in chains and fetters…
6. Look at the Madani period: we may ask, who was it who stood firm with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) at Hunayn when most of the Muslims fled? Was it the new converts who had become Muslim at the Conquest of Makkah, and who had not yet received sufficient training at the hands of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), most of whom had gone out only in search of booty? No… most of those who stood firm were the crème de la crème of the believers, who had already received that great training.

If they had not received such training, do you think they would have stood firm?

Having confidence in the road you are following

No doubt the more confident the Muslim is of the path he is following, the more steadfast he will be in adhering to it. There are many ways of achieving this, including the following:

1. Feeling that the way which you are following is not something new that started in this century, but that it is an ancient and venerable way which the Prophets, speakers of truth, scholars, martyrs and righteous people have followed before you. This will reduce your feelings of loneliness and replace your alienation with a sense of comfort, and your sadness will turn to joy because you will feel that all these people are your brothers in this way and methodology.

2. Feeling that you are among the chosen. Allaah says (interpretation of the meanings):

   "…Praise and thanks be to Allaah, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! …" [al-Naml 27:59]

   "Then We gave the Book (the Qur'aan) for inheritance to such of Our slaves as We chose…" [Faatir 35:32]

   "Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of dreams (and other things)…" [Yoosuf 12:6]

   Just as Allaah has chosen the Prophets, so the righteous have a share in this being chosen, which is that they have inherited the knowledge of the Prophets.

3. How would you feel if Allaah had created you inanimate, or a dumb beast, or an atheist kaafir, or one who calls to bid'ah, or an immoral wrongdoer, or a Muslim who does not call others to Islam, or one who calls to a way that is filled with error?

4. Do you not see that this feeling of having been chosen by Allaah and been made one of those who call to the way of Ahl al-Sunnah

wa'l-Jamaa'ah is one of the factors which will keep you steadfast in your methodology and in this path?

Calling others to Allaah (da'wah)

The soul that is not active will stagnate. One of the most important fields in which one can be active is the field of da'wah, calling others to Allaah. This is the work of the Prophets, work which will save you from punishment, realize your potential and enable you to achieve great things. *"Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as you are commanded…" [al-Shoora 42:15 – interpretation of the meaning]*. It is not true to say that someone is neither making progress nor slipping back (for if you are not making progress, you are therefore falling back – no one is static). If a person is not occupied in acts of worship and obedience, he will be busy with sin and disobedience, and faith can wax and wane (it does not remain constant).

Calling to the correct methodology – by devoting time to it, making mental and physical efforts, and speaking out, so that da'wah becomes the main concern of the Muslim – will block the Shaytaan's efforts to tempt him and lead him astray.

In addition to that, being challenged by obstacles and stubborn people on the journey of da'wah will make the da'iyah stronger in faith.

Besides bringing a great reward, da'wah is also a means of being steadfast in one's faith and protecting oneself from backsliding, because the one who is attacking does not need to defend himself, and Allaah is with the da'iyahs, making them stand firm. The da'iyah is like a doctor fighting illness with his experience and knowledge: by fighting the illness in others he will be the least likely to suffer it himself.

Keepin close to people who will help make you steadfast

These are people whose characteristics the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) referred to in the hadeeth, "Among the people are some who open the way to goodness and close the way to evil." (Hasan, reported by Ibn Maajah from Anas, 237, and by Ibn Abi 'Aasim in *Kitaab al-Sunnah*, 1/127. See

also *Al-Silsilat al-Saheehah*, 1332). Looking for scholars, righteous people and believing da'iyahs, and keeping close to them, is a great help in remaining steadfast. When times of trial arose in Islamic history, Allaah helped the Muslims to stand firm with the help of some individuals.

For example, 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "Allaah supported His Religion with al-Siddeeq [Abu Bakr] at the time of the Riddah (apostasy), and with Ahmad at the time of the test."

Think about what Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said about the role of his shaykh, Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] in helping Muslims to stand firm: "When our fear became too great and we began to think the worst and things got too difficult for us, we would come to him. We only had to see him and hear his words, and all that would go away, to be replaced by tranquillity, strength, assurance and calm. Glory be to the One Who made His slaves witness Paradise before their meeting with Him, opened its door to them in this world and caused them to feel its fragrant breezes so that they would devote all their energy to seeking it and competing for it." (*Al-Waabil al-Sayib*, p. 97).

Here Islamic brotherhood emerges as a basic source of steadfastness. Your righteous brothers, leaders and teachers are a source of help for you on the path, a strong pillar on which you can lean. They can make you more steadfast through the aayaat they know and the wisdom they possess… Stick with them and live among them; do not be alone, lest the shayaateen overwhelm you, for the sheep that the wolf eats is the one that wanders off away from the flock.

<u>Being confident of the help of Allaah, and that the future belongs to Islam</u>

We need to stand firm even more when victory is delayed, so that we will not go astray after being steadfast. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"And many a Prophet fought (in Allaah's Cause) and along with him (fought) large bands of religious learned men. But they never lost heart for that which did befall them in Allaah's Way, nor did they weaken nor degrade themselves. And Allaah loves al-saabireen (the patient ones). And*

they said nothing but: 'Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our transgressions (in keeping our duties to You), establish our feet firmly, and give us victory over the disbelieving folk.' So Allaah gave them the reward of this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter…" [Aal 'Imraan 3:146-148]

When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) wanted to calm down his persecuted Companions and make them steadfast, he told them, at times of persecution and testing, that the future belonged to Islam. What did he say? Al-Bukhaari reported from Khabbaab that he said: "Allaah will certainly complete this matter (i.e., Islam), until a traveller will be able to go from San'aa' to Hadramawt fearing nothing except Allaah and the wolf that may attack his sheep." (Reported by al-Bukhaari; see *Fath al-Baari*, 7/165).

Telling the young generation about the ahaadeeth that give the good news of the future belonging to Islam is an important part of their education and training to stand firm in their religion.

<u>Understanding the reality of falsehood and not being misled by it</u>

Allaah tells us (interpretation of the meaning): *"Let not the free disposal (and affluence) of the disbelievers throughout the land deceive you." [Aal 'Imraan 3:196]*. This offers reassurance to the believers and helps them to stand firm.

Allaah also tells us: *"… Then, as for the foam, it passes away as scum upon the banks…" [al-Ra'd 13:17].* This is a lesson for those who have intelligence, not to fear falsehood or to submit to it.

The Qur'aan also exposes the aims and means of the people of falsehood, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"And thus do We explain the aayaat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail, that the way of the mujrimoon (criminals, polytheists, sinners) may become manifest" [al-An'aam 6:55]* – so that the Muslims will not be caught unawares and so that they will know from which direction Islam will be attacked.

How often have we heard about and seen movements collapsing and dai'yahs losing their steadfastness because of attacks which they did not expect due to their ignorance of their enemies.

Acquiring the characteristics that will help one to remain steadfast

The most important of these is *sabr* (patience). Al-Bukhaari and Muslim report that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “No one is given any gift greater and more bountiful than patience.” (Reported by al-Bukhaari in *Kitaab al-Zakaah, Baab al-Isti’faaf ‘an al-mas’alah*; and by Muslim in*Kitaab al-Zakaah, Baab Fadl al-Ta’affuf wa’l-Sabr*). The greatest patience comes at the onset of a disaster, and if something unexpected befalls a man, the disaster will overwhelm him and he will lose his steadfastness, if he does not have patience.

Think about what Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “I saw an old man, nearly eighty years old, who always used to come to jamaa’ah prayers. A son of his daughter died, and he said, ‘No one should pray to Allaah any more, because He does not respond.’ Then he said, ‘Allaah is stubborn and does not leave us a son.’” (*Al-Thabaat ‘ind al-Mawt* by Ibn al-Jawzi, p. 34). Exalted be Allaah far above what he said.

When the Muslims were defeated at Uhud, this disaster was quite unexpected, because Allaah had promised them victory, but Allaah taught them a hard lesson through the blood of the martyrs. *“(What is the matter with you?) When a single disaster smites you, although you smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, you say: ‘From where does this come to us?’ Say (to them), ‘It is from yourselves (because of your evil deeds).’…” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:165 – interpretation of the meaning]*. How could they have been the cause of it?

“… you lost your courage and fell to disputing about the order, and disoebeyed after He showed you (of the booty) which you love. Among you are some that desire this world…” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:152 – interpretation of the meaning].

The advice of righteous men

When the Muslim is faced with trials and his Lord tests him in order to purify him, one of the means which Allaah gives him to help him stand firm is a righteous man who will advise and help him. Through this man’s words Allaah helps the believer to stand firm and directs his steps. These words remind him of Allaah, the

Meeting with Him, His Paradise and His Hell. There follow some examples from the life of Imaam Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him), who entered the test and emerged as pure gold.

He was taken to al-Ma'moon in chains, and (al-Ma'moon) had already issued him such a stern warning before he reached him that a servant said to Imaam Ahmad, "It hurts me, O Abu 'Abd-Allaah, that al-Ma'moon has unsheathed a sword which he has never unsheathed before, and he swears by his relationship to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that if you do not accept what he says about the Qur'aan being created, he will certainly kill you with that sword." (*Al-Bidaayah wa'l-Nihaayah*, 1/332)

At this point, the intelligent scholars took the opportunity to say to their imaam words that would help him to remain steadfast. In*al-Siyar* (11/238), al-Dhahabi reports from Abu Ja'far al-Anbaari: "When Ahmad was taken to al-Ma'moon, I was told about it, so I crossed the Euphrates and found him sitting in an inn, where I greeted him. He said, 'O Abu Ja'far, why did you go to the trouble (of coming here)?' I said, 'Listen to me, today you are the leader and the people are following you. By Allaah, if you accept that the Qur'aan is created, a lot of people will go along with that, but if you do not, then neither will they. Even if this man (al-Ma'moon) does not kill you, you will still die, because death is inevitable, so fear Allaah, and do not go along with (al-Ma'moon).' Ahmad began to weep and said, '*Ma sha Allaah*.' Then he said, 'O Abu Ja'far, say it again,' so I said it again, and he kept saying, '*Ma sha Allaah*.'…"

With regard to his being taken to al-Ma'moon, Imaam Ahmad said: "We reached al-Rahbah at midnight, and a man came to us and said, 'Which of you is Ahmad ibn Hanbal?' He was told, 'This man.' He said to the camel-driver, 'Slow down.' … Then he said, 'Listen to me, why should you worry if you get killed here and go to Paradise?' Then he said, 'May Allaah be with you,' and left. I asked about him and I was told, 'He is an Arab from the tribe of Rabee'ah who deals with wool in the desert. He is called Jaabir ibn 'Aamir, and they say good things about him.'" (*Siyar A'laam al-Nubala'*, 11/241).

In *al-Bidaayah wa'l-Nihaayah*, it says that a Bedouin said to Imaam Ahmad: "Listen to me, you are a representative of the people, so do not be bad news for them. You are the leader of the people today, so beware of doing what they are asking you to do, lest you bear their sins on the Day of Resurrection. If you love Allaah, then bear this with patience, for the only thing standing between you and Paradise is your being killed."

Imaam Ahmad said: "His words strengthened my resolve not to do what they were asking me to do." (*Al-Bidaayah wa'l-Nihaayah*, 1/332).

It was reported that Imaam Ahmad said: "I never heard any stronger words at that time than what a Bedouin said to me at Rahbat Tawq, a village between al-Raqqah and Baghdaad on the banks of the Euphrates. He said, 'O Ahmad, if they kill you for the truth, you will be a *shaheed* (martyr), and if you live, you will be praised.' And so my heart grew strong." (*Siyar A'laam al-Nubala'*, 11/241).

Imaam Ahmad said of the young man Muhammad ibn Nooh, who accompanied him at that time of trial: "Even though he was so young, he had such great knowledge, and I never saw anyone who adhered more firmly to the command of Allaah than Muhammad ibn Nooh, and I hope that his end was good. He said to me one day, 'O Abu 'Abd-Allaah, you are not like me. You are a man whom people follow, and they are straining their necks to see what you will do, so fear Allaah and adhere to His commands.' Then he died, and I prayed the *janaazah* (funeral) prayer for him and buried him." (*Siyar A'laam al-Nubala'*, 11/242)

Even his fellow-prisoners, whom Imaam Ahmad used to lead in prayer in chains, had a role to play in helping him to stand firm. One day when he was in prison, Imaam Ahmad said, "I don't care about being in prison – it is no different from my home – or about being killed by the sword, but I am afraid of the trial of being whipped." One of the other prisoners heard him and said, "Don't worry, O Abu 'Abd-Allaah, it is only two lashes of the whip, then you don't feel where the rest fall." It was as if this reassured him and calmed him down. (*Siyar A'laam al-Nubala'*, 11/240)

> So try to seek advice from righteous people, and try to understand it if it is given to you.
>
> Seek their advice before you travel, if you think that something could happen to you. Seek their advice when you are facing some trial, or before some test that you expect to face. Seek their advice if you are appointed to a position of authority or if you inherit some wealth.
>
> Make yourself stand firm, and help others to do so too. Allaah is the Protector of the believers.

<u>Thinking about the delights of Paradise and the punishments of Hellfire, and remembering death.</u>

Paradise is the abode of joy, the consolation of those who grieve, the final destination of the believers. The soul is by nature not inclined to make sacrifices or work hard or stand firm unless it gets something in return that makes difficulties easy and helps it to overcome the obstacles in its way.

The one who knows about the reward will find it easy to work hard, because he will be aware that if he does not remain steadfast, he will miss out on Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth. The soul needs something to lift it above the dust of this earth and raise it to the heavenly world.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used the mention of Paradise to encourage his Companions to stand firm. According a a hasan saheeh hadeeth, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) passed by Yaasir, ‘Ammaar and Umm ‘Ammaar when they were being tortured for the sake of Allaah and said, “Patience, family of Yaasir, patience, family of Yaasir, for your destination is Paradise.” (Reported by al-Haakim, 3/383; it is a hasan saheeh hadeeth. See *Fiqh al-Seerah*, ed. Al-Albaani, p. 103).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to tell the Anssar: “You will face selfish people after my death, so have patience until you meet me at the Hawd (cistern – on the Day of Judgement).” (Agreed upon)

Similarly, one should think about the situation of both groups (believers and kuffaar) in the grave, the gathering, the reckoning, the scales of justice, the bridge over Hell, and the other events of the Hereafter.

Remembering death protects the Muslim from backsliding and helps him to adhere to the limits set by Allaah, so that he does not transgress them. If he knows that death is closer to him than his own shoelaces and that his time could come at any moment, how can he let himself slip or persevere in deviation? Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Always remember the destroyer of pleasure." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 2/50; classed as saheeh in *Irwa' al-Ghaleel*, 3/145).

Situations where steadfastness is required

There are many such situations, which need to be discussed in detail, but we can only list them in brief here.

Times of trial and tribulation

Trials and tribulations can cause the heart to change. Whether they are the trials of ease or of hardship, only those who have understanding and whose hearts are filled with faith can remain steadfast.

Among the different types of trials are:

1. The trial of wealth. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):*"And of them are some who made a covenant with Allaah (saying): 'If He bestowed on us of His Bounty, we will verily give charity and will be certainly among those who are righteous. Then when He gave them of His Bounty, they became niggardly, and turned away, averse." [al-Tawbah 9:75-76]*

2. The trial of worldly power and authority. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"And keep yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord morning and afternoon, seeking His Face, and let not your eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp and glitter of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made*

heedless of Our Remembrance, one who follows his own lusts and whose affair (deeds) has been lost." [al-Kahf 18:28].

Concerning the danger of these two types of trial, the Prophet(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Two hungry wolves sent against the sheep could not do more damage to them than the damage done by a man's eagerness for wealth and power to his religion." (Reported by Imaam Ahmad in *al-Musnad*, 3/460; see also *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 5496). The meaning is that a man's desire for wealth and power will do more damage to his religion than the damage done by two hungry wolves to a flock of sheep.

3. The trial of one's wife. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"… Verily, among your wives and your children there are enemies for you (i.e., may stop you from the obedience of Allaah), therefore beware of them!…" [al-Taghaabun 64:14]*

4. The trial of children. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Children are the cause of cowardice, the cause of stinginess and the cause of grief." (Reported by Abu Ya'laa, 2/305 – it also has corroborating reports. See also *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 7037).

5. The trial of persecution, oppression and injustice. Allaah has described this in the most evocative terms in the Qur'aan (interpretation of the meaning): *"Cursed were the people of the ditch, fire supplied (abdunantly) with fuel, when they sat by it (the fire), and they witnessed what they were doing against the believers (i.e., burning them). They had nothing against them, except that they believed in Allaah, the All-Mighty, Worthy of all Praise! To Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And Allaah is Witness over everything." [al-Burooj 85:4-9]*

   Al-Bukhaari reported from Khabbaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: "We complained to the Messenger of Allaah(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he was reclining on his cloak in the shade of the Ka'bah. He (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Among the people who came before you, there was a man who was taken and put into a hole dug for him in the earth, then a saw was put on his head and he was cut into two pieces, and an iron comb was used to tear the flesh from his bones, but this still did not turn him away from his religion." (Reported by al-Bukhaari, see *Fath al-Baari*, 12/315).

6. The trial of the Dajjaal (“antichrist”), which is the greatest trial in this world. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “O people, there has never been any fitnah (trial) on the face of the earth since Allaah created Adam greater than the trial of the Dajjaal… O slaves of Allaah, O people, stand firm, for I shall describe him to you in a way that no Prophet before me has described him…” (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 2/1359; see *Saheeh al-Jaami’*, 7752).

Conclusion

With regard to the heart and the trials it is subjected to, the Prophet(peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Hearts are exposed to trials one after the other. Any heart that succumbs to them is stained with a black spot, and any heart that resists them becomes pure white, until all hearts of one of these two types. The white heart is intensely white and will not be harmed by any trial so long as heaven and earth remain, and the black heart is intensely black and does not recognize good or forbid evil, except what suits its own whims and desires.” (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 5/386, and by Muslim, 1/128 – this version narrated by Muslim).

Steadfastness in jihaad

> *“O you who believe! When you meet (an enemy) force, take a firm stand against them…” [al-Anfaal 8:45 – interpretation of the meaning]*. One of the major sins (kabaa’ir) in our religion is running away from the battlefield. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was carrying earth on his back when they were digging the trench (*al-khandaq*), he repeated with the believers, “Make us steadfast when we meet our enemies.” (Reported by al-Bukhaari in *Kitaab al-Ghazawaat, Bab Ghazwat al-Khandaq*. See *al-Fath*, 7/399)

Steadfast adherence to the *manhaj* (methodology of the Qur’aan and Sunnah)

"Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allaah [i.e., they have gone out for jihaad (holy fighting), and showed not their backs to the disbelievers], of them some have fulfilled their obligations (i.e., have been martyred), and some of them are still waiting, but they have never changed [i.e., they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allaah] in the least." [al-Ahzaab 33:23 – interpretation of the meaning]. Their principles are dearer to them than their own souls, and their determination knows no compromise.

Steadfastness at the time of death

The kuffaar and immoral people are denied steadfastness at the most difficult and most stressful times, and they cannot utter the Shahaadah at the time of death – which is one of the signs of a bad end. A man was told when he was dying to say *Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*, and he started to move his head from right to left, refusing to say it. Another started to say, "This is an excellent piece, this is a bargain," when he was dying. A third began to mention the names of various chess pieces, and a fourth started to hum the tunes of songs, or to mention the name of someone he loved. This is because those things distracted them from remembering Allaah in this world.

You may see some of these people with blackened faces, or a foul odour, or turning away from the qiblah – *laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa billaah* (there is no strength or power except with Allaah).

But the people of righteousness, who follow the Sunnah, are helped by Allaah to stand firm at the time of death, and so they utter the Shahaadatayn. You may see some of them with a cheerful face and a pleasant scent, looking as if they are hearing good news when their souls are taken from their bodies.

This is an example of one of those whom Allaah helped to be steadfast at the time of death. His name was Abu Zar'ah al-Raazi, one of the imaams of the scholars of hadeeth:

"Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali Warraaq Abu Zar'ah said: we were with Abu Zar'ah in Shahraan, one of the villages of al-Riyy, when he started dying, and Abu Haatim, Ibn Waarah, al-Mundhir ibn Shaadhaan and others were with him. They remembered the hadeeth, 'Tell those who

are dying to say *Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*,' but they felt too shy to tell Abu Zar'ah to say it. They said, 'Let us mention the hadeeth.' Ibn Waarah said: 'Abu 'Aasim told us, 'Abd al-Hameed ibn Ja'far told us, from Saalih,' and he started to say 'Ibn Abi…' but he could not go any further. Then Abu Haatim said, 'Bundaar told us Abu 'Aasim told us, from 'Abd al-Hameed ibn Ja'far, from Saalih…' but he could not go any further, and the rest remained silent. Then Abu Zar'ah said, whilst he was dying, he opened his eyes and said: 'Bundaar told us, Abu 'Aasim told us, 'Abd al-Hameed told us, from Saalih ibn Abi Ghareeb from Katheer ibn Murrah from Mu'aadh ibn Jabal who said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "Whoever says as his last words *La ilaaha ill-Allaah*, will enter Paradise."' Then his soul departed, may Allaah have mercy on him." (*Siyar A'laam al-Nubala'*, 13/76-85).

These are the ones of whom Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"Verily, those who say: 'Our Lord is Allaah (Alone),' and then they stood straight (followed Islam truly), on them the angels will descend (at the time of their death) (saying): 'Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!'" [Fussilat 41:30]*

O Allaah, make us among them. O Allaah, we ask you to make us adhere to Islam with determination and wisdom. And the end of our prayer is: praise be to Allaah, Lord of the Worlds.